

Message Text

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SUBJECT: GOVERNMENT TRIES CONTROVERSIAL CASES

REF: 77 PORT AU PRINCE 4747

1. WITHOUT ANY ADVANCE PUBLICITY HAITI LEARNED FROM BOTH GOVERNMENT AND INDEPENDENT RADIO STATIONS THIS MORNING (MARCH 14) THAT TWO MEMBERS OF NATIONAL SECURITY VOLUNTEERS (VSN) ACCUSED OF BEATING NEWSPAPER PUBLISHER PASTOR LUC NEREE LAST DECEMBER WERE ON TRIAL AT THE PALACE OF JUSTICE. AS NEWS OF THE TRIAL SPREAD A STANDING-ROOM-ONLY CROWD GATHERED IN THE COURTROOM.

2. AVAILABLE DETAILS ARE SKETCHY BUT RADIO REPORTS STATED THAT THE DEFENDENTS, WESNER PETION AND ESTERNE JOSEPH, DENIED ACTUALLY BEATING PASTOR NEREE. HOWEVER, THE CHIEF GOVERNMENT PROSECUTOR OF THE CIVIL TRIBUNAL OF PORT-AU-PRINCE, RODERIGUE CASIMIR, ASKED THE COURT THAT THEY BE FOUND GUILTY AND SENTENCED TO THREE YEARS IMPRISONMENT AS PRESCRIBED BY ARTICLE 254 OF HAITIAN PENAL CODE. RADIO REPORTS THAT PASTOR NEREE HAS "NOTHING AGAINST" THE TWO MEN AND THAT HE WILL PRAY FOR THEM.

3. DECISION OF TRIBUNAL'S PRESIDING JUDGE, ROCK RAYMOND, WILL
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PAGE 02 PORT A 00971 142133Z

BE RENDERED LATER THIS WEEK AND MOST OBSERVERS EXPECT HIM TO IMPOSE SENTENCE REQUESTED BY PROSECUTOR CASIMIR. SAME OBSERVERS ALSO EXPECT THAT PETION AND JOSEPH, IF SENTENCED, WILL BENEFIT FROM EARLY PRESIDENTIAL AMNESTY.

4. JUST PRIOR TO NEWS OF TRIAL OF NEREE'S ASSAILANTS
HAITIAN PRESS AND RADIO ANNOUNCED THAT A FIVE-OFFICER MILITARY

TRIBUNAL IS EXPECTED TO CONVENE MARCH 16 TO TRY ARMY LT. CLAUDE REMY IN SHOOTING DEATH OF ENGINEER JACQUES CADET ON FEBRUARY 5 DURING CARNIVAL CELEBRATIONS. REMY IS THE SON OF HAITIAN AMBASSADOR TO VENEZUELA ERNST REMY AND NEPHEW OF INFLUENTIAL MILITARY COMMANDER IN CAP HAITIEN, LT. COL. RAOUL REMY. SHOOTING WAS WITNESSED BY LARGE CROWD AND THERE HAS BEEN CONSIDERABLE PUBLIC SPECULATION AS TO HOW GOVERNMENT WOULD TREAT THIS HOT-BLOODED YOUNG OFFICER WITH POWERFUL FAMILY CONNECTIONS. ANNOUNCEMENT OF IMPENDING TRIAL HAS CAUSED SPECULATION TO SHIFT TO SEVERITY OF SENTENCE LIKELY TO BE IMPOSED.

5. COMMENTS: THESE TWO TRIALS, AND A FEW OTHERS THAT MAY FOLLOW, ARE EVENTS OF MAJOR SYMBOLIC IMPORTANCE. ONLY LAST WEEKEND THE SEMI-OFFICIAL DAILY LE NOUVEAU MONDE CRITICIZED THE SLOW PACE OF HAITIAN JUSTICE. IN ADDITION TO MAKING GOOD ITS PROMISES OF SPEEDIER AND FAIRER JUSTICE THE GOH NO DOUBT ALSO HAS IN MIND THE RECENT VISIT OF THE INTER-AMERICAN PRESS ASSOCIATION COMMISSION OF INQUIRY ON PRESS FREEDOM AND THE FORTHCOMING MISSION OF THE INTER-AMERICAN HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION.

6. EMBASSY WILL REPORT FURTHER DETAILS AS AVAILABLE.
JONES

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